

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

DRAFT NOTTINGHAMSHIRE VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the draft Nottinghamshire Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) as attached at Appendix A, including the consultation process undertaken and how this will be delivered.
2. To present the draft VES and its updated priorities for discussion, and for Council to provide feedback on the draft strategy and its themes and priority areas so the feedback can be taken into consideration and inform any amendments, prior to approval being sought from the relevant decision maker for its approval, publication and subsequent delivery.

Information

3. In 2018, the Visitor Economy was one of the UK's largest and fastest growing industries, generating £106 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) a year. It employed over 2 million people and supported thousands of businesses. In response, the Council produced its first ever VES in 2018. The strategy was about delivering five years of change for tourism in Nottinghamshire, with an eye on the longer-term opportunities. This strategy was largely focused on County Council assets and what it could influence as landowner.
4. More recently, the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee agreed to refresh the original VES. The objective was to consider the wider visitor economy landscape, to identify how the Council could support the short-term recovery of the sector as whole, whilst maintaining long term resilience amongst the key stakeholders. The draft VES (see Appendix A) sets out the ambition and priorities of the Council for the Visitor Economy. It outlines the role of the Council as leader, enabler, facilitator, influencer, accountable body, investor, partner, supporter, collaborator, and advisor around a shared, inclusive and well communicated vision and plan. This will sit alongside the Council's cultural strategy and the role of our assets in the Visitor Economy (including Bestwood Country Park, Holme Pierrepont, Rufford Abbey, Sherwood Forest).
5. In September 2022, the Council launched a public and stakeholder consultation on the draft VES for a 6-week period. During this time, an online survey was available and over 30 engagement activities/meetings took place (including with Districts and Borough Councils, and heritage and business forums etc). The revised iteration of the VES will act as a key document for visitor economy businesses, external stakeholders and partners, sectors in the visitor economy supply chain and internal stakeholders within the Council, so consultation was essential to inform and cement our thinking.

6. There was a good level of response to the online survey, as well as detailed feedback received at the stakeholder events. There was overwhelming support for the revisions to the strategy, and 80% of the online respondents stated that the document and its purpose were clear. Comments were received on all aspects of the Strategy, and these were all taken into account, as well as the comments received from the stakeholder meetings/events.

Draft Themes (for discussion)

7. After reviewing the consultation feedback, there are now six themes which have been identified as the key selling points and reasons why visitors come to the County. By setting out these themes and communicating them clearly, it is hoped that all organisations in the sector can see where they fit into the bigger picture and how to prioritise their thinking and resources to capitalise on this, build resilience and achieve sustained growth. These have been selected for their relevance to the people and culture of Nottinghamshire and are proposed, as follows:
- **Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest** - Nottinghamshire is known across the world for Sherwood Forest, the home of the legendary Robin Hood. As well as the role Hollywood and popular culture has played in creating an icon, the ideals that Robin Hood stands for including freedom, social justice, living with nature and the fair distribution of wealth resonate with many people today. It is imperative that Nottinghamshire makes the most of Robin Hood as a “hook” to introduce visitors to all the other wonderful things the county has to offer.
 - **History and Heritage** - Although world famous for Robin Hood, Nottinghamshire has a fascinating history and heritage that goes far beyond the legendary outlaw. Some of Nottinghamshire's other heritage includes caves, castles, farming, monasteries, the Dukeries, literary greats, mining, and the English Civil war and much more. The County also possesses a battlefield, the site of the last battle in the Wars of the Roses. History and heritage is so broad a theme, it was decided to sub-categorise this into six areas:
 - Inspirational and rebellious characters
 - County Towns and Villages
 - Literary Heritage
 - Caves
 - Industry and Innovation
 - Medieval History (Dukeries, Southwell Minster, Monasteries and Abbeys, etc.)
 - **Green and Active** - Nottinghamshire is a rural county, with valued green spaces and the Council is committed to the environment. The pandemic highlighted just how important green spaces are in supporting active lifestyles and in helping people's mental health and wellbeing. From nature reserves, leisure cycle routes and long-distance paths (such as the Robin Hood Way) to archery, water activities and other active pursuits, 'Green and Active' is about getting active in nature and appreciating it in all its glory
 - **Sport as a spectacle** - In the past, Nottinghamshire has been named as the Home of Sport by Visit England and has more sports facilities per head of the population than anywhere else in Europe. Sport tourism is also a significant driver of economic growth. As an example, the Tour of Britain brought 225,000 spectators who lined the Nottinghamshire route in 2022 and generated £4.3m of economic growth in Nottinghamshire. Nottinghamshire's sporting offer and heritage is strong, from legendary sporting heroes to world class sporting facilities.
 - **Contemporary Culture** - Contemporary culture refers to the common themes of art, music, film, theatre, architecture, and literature that are popular at the present time which may one day become part of our heritage. In Nottinghamshire, there is an active

cultural scene often demonstrated through events, projects, concerts, festivals and performances.

- **Local Crafts and produce** - Local crafts have undergone a revival in recent years. Visitors are now more inclined to buy local as it supports the local community and is better for the environment. Similarly, these days people are much more interested in where their food and drink has come from and want to know more about the businesses and stories behind them. Food and drink play a huge part in determining visitor perceptions of a destination and plays a large part in the visitor economy. These are available at a wealth of food and drink restaurants, cafes and outlets around the county.

Priority Areas for Delivery (for discussion)

8. The draft strategy sets out the five priority areas of work which will be delivered as part of the action plan currently being developed in partnership with district/boroughs, visitor economy businesses and other stakeholders. The proposed priority areas are:
 - **Invest in People** - We will aim to build skills, knowledge, jobs and capacity so people can thrive in the sector. We will develop an inclusive approach that people can relate to that puts Nottinghamshire people at the heart of the story. We will empower people to share, enjoy, respect, understand and care for our county and unique assets.
 - **Invest in Promotion** - We will aim to develop a distinctive and unique brand for Nottinghamshire. Through promotion and marketing, we will raise the profile of our county, locally, regionally, nationally and globally.
 - **Invest in Product** - Stimulating investment in developing relevant, high-quality products while protecting and preserving our assets for future generations, we will bring together providers to create a stronger, more coherent, joined up offer.
 - **Invest in Place** - We will aim to establish a sustainable, co-ordinated approach to develop Nottinghamshire as a destination that more people will want to visit, stay in and return to. We will create improved facilities, infrastructure and connectivity, bringing everything together to create a unique identity and 'sense of place' across the County.
 - **Invest in Performance** - We will build on our strengths and increase visitor stays and spend. We will base our strategies and actions on data and evidence. We will measure the results regularly and share our learning and best practice.
9. Following feedback on the themes and priority areas of work (as detailed above), the VES will be updated accordingly. Officers will then:
 - seek the relevant approval from the executive/relevant decision maker;
 - launch the finalised VES;
 - establish a cross council departmental group; and
 - consolidate an accompanying action plan to start to deliver the aims and ambitions outlined in the strategy through partnership and stakeholder engagement.

Other Options Considered

10. Due to the nature and importance of the Council's role in supporting the visitor economy and its wide-ranging economic impact across the County, it is important to seek cross party views prior to being finalised. The comments received will help inform the final Strategy and supporting action plan. Not bringing the report forward for consideration at Full Council would not enable the views of all Members to be taken into account.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

- 11.To inform the review of the VES, Officers have sought a wide range of views from key stakeholders and Members. The feedback received will support the preparation of the VES, which is expected to support the Nottinghamshire Plan for a healthy, prosperous, and greener Nottinghamshire, in particular the delivery of Ambition 5: Building skills that help people get good jobs and Ambition 6: Making Nottinghamshire a great place to live, work and visit. The revised strategy also fulfils objectives outlined in the Council's Economic Transition Plan.

Statutory and Policy Implications

- 12.This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications to this report. Any subsequent approval of the VES and its delivery will consider the financial implications.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Full Council:

- 1) Notes the draft Visitor Economy Strategy and the work done to date.
- 2) Provides feedback on the content of the draft strategy, the six themes and the five priority areas of work as set out in the report, which will be taken into consideration by the relevant decision maker, when considering the final strategy for approval and delivery.

Councillor Keith Girling

Cabinet Member Economic Development and Asset management

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 10.01.2023)

The report is to inform Council and allows for feedback into the draft strategy prior to it being approved. Council has the authority to consider the report and recommendations.

Finance Comments (SES 06/01/2023)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All